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ABSTRACT

This paper evaluates the Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) Basic and Pilot Project Grant Programs. Among the major questions addressed in the evaluation were: What kinds of students participate in the programs, what kinds of districts and schools receive support, what are the funding patterns, how are the funds translated into services, how successfully are services targeted toward needy students, what is the short-term and long-term national impact of the program, and what kinds of school programs have most successfully produced gains in student achievement? The general design of the evaluation was one of contrasting the performance of two groups of students: those participating in an ESAA-funded program and comparable students not participating in such a program. Findings indicate that by the end of the third year, the program appeared to have had some impact on student achievement. This impact was limited to the Basic Elementary sample. With regard to effective program attributes, student achievement was higher in those programs where (a) there was strong administrative leadership behind the program, (b) instructional practices relied heavily on the use of behavioral objectives and individualized instruction, and (c) emphasis was placed on equality of educational opportunity. The program did not appear to have had any effect on student perception of school climate. (Author/AM)

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NATIONAL EVALUATION OF THE EMERGENCY SCHOOL AID ACT BASIC AND PILOT PROJECT GRANT PROGRAMS

June, 1977

BACKGROUND

In June 1972, the Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) was enacted into law (PL 92-318, as amended by PL 93-380 and PL 94-482) to provide local educational agencies with financial assistance to (a) meet the special needs incident to the elimination of minority-group segregation and discrimination among students and faculty in elementary and secondary schools, (b) encourage the voluntary elimination, reduction or prevention of minority-group isolation in elementary and secondary schools with substantial proportions of minority-group students, and (c) aid school children in overcoming the educational disadvantages of minority-group isolation. Eight subprograms are authorized under the ESAA legislation: Basic Grants, Pilot Project Grants, grants to nonProfit Organizations, Bilingual Projects, Educational Television, Metropolitan Area Projects, Special Projects, and Evaluation. The first three are State apportionment programs; the remaining five, discretionary programs. During the 1974, 1975 and 1976 fiscal years, approximately 75 per cent of the ESAA-appropriated funds were allocated to the Basic Grants and Pilot Project Grants subprograms.

The Basic Grant subprogram is a desegregation assistance program in which grants are awarded to eligible school districts to encourage the reduction of minority-group isolation, to meet the special needs incident to the elimination of segregation and discrimination, and to assist elementary and secondary school children in overcoming the educational disadvantages associated with minority-group isolation. Basic Grants may be awarded to any Local Education Agency which (a) is implementing a desegregation plan or has adopted and will implement such a plan if assistance is made available, or (b) has a plan to enroll non-resident children in its schools to reduce minority-group isolation, or (c) has no desegregation plan but has minority-group student enrollment exceeding 50 percent, provided that the Local Education Agency establishes or maintains at least one integrated school. In contrast to Basic Grants, Pilot Project Grants are awarded to Local Education Agencies for unusually promising projects designed to overcome the adverse effects of minority-group isolation by improving the academic achievement of children in minority-isolated schools (i.e., schools with 50 per cent or greater minority enrollment.) To be eligible for a Pilot Grant, a Local Education Agency must be implementing a desegregation plan or a plan to reduce minority-group isolation that would make it eligible for a Basic Grant. In addition, at least 15,000 minority-group students must be enrolled in the schools of the Local Education Agency, or minority-group students must constitute more than 50 per cent of the total Local Education Agency enrollment.

In 1973, the U.S. Office of Education's Office of Planning, Budgeting and Evaluation contracted with the System Development Corporation of Santa Monica, California to conduct a national evaluation of the effectiveness of the Basic Grants and Pilot Project Grants subprograms. The major questions addressed in the evaluation were:

- What kinds of students participate in ESAA Basic Grant and Pilot Project Grant programs?
- What kinds of districts and schools receive ESAA support?
- What are the funding patterns in ESAA districts and schools?
- How are ESAA and other funds translated into services? How successfully are services targeted toward needy students?
- What is the short-term and long-term national impact of ESAA in terms of Congressionally-authorized program goals?
- What kinds of school programs have most successfully produced gains in student achievement?

METHODOLOGY

The general design of the evaluation was one of contrasting the performance of two groups of students: those participating in an ESAA-funded program and comparable students not participating in such a program. Starting in fall 1973, students in grades 3 through 5 and 10 through 12 were pretested and posttested for three academic years, with students in grades 5 and 12 leaving the sample each year.

Standardized achievement tests were used to measure student achievement in Reading and Mathematics. Student perception of school climate (relationships between student and teacher/principal) was assessed by the School Climate Questionnaire. Additional questionnaires were used to gather student background data, district/school demographic data, determine district/school expenditures, and determine the characteristics of the education program. Attendance and exposure logs were used to measure student exposure to instruction.

School districts receiving ESAA Basic or Pilot Project Grants in 1973 were divided into 3 categories: those receiving a Basic Grant for programs involving elementary grade students, those receiving a Basic Grant for secondary students, and those receiving Pilot Project Grants for elementary grade students. (School districts receiving Pilot Project Grants for secondary grade students were not considered because the number of such districts was very small.) Within each category, a representative sample of school districts was selected for participation in the evaluation. In any one year (of the 3-year evaluation), 32 school districts were in the Basic Elementary sample, 15 in the Basic Secondary sample, and 18 in the Pilot Elementary sample. Within each school district included in the evaluation, two ESAA-eligible and comparable schools were randomly selected; one was given ESAA funding, the other was not funded by ESAA.* Within each school participating in the evaluation, students were sampled randomly over classrooms for a given grade level. In any one year, approximately 27,000 students were tested in 130 schools.

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* Some deviations from this pattern occurred in the third year. See Table 1.

FINDINGS

What kinds of students receive ESAA services?

- In the Basic Elementary sample, the percentage of minority-group students was 50; for the Basic Secondary, 42; and, for the Pilot Elementary, 85.
- According to teachers, students in all three samples were of low socioeconomic status (parents had low status jobs and relatively little education).
- Regarding student achievement at Fall pretest time (all three years), mean test scores ranged from the 17th to 38th percentiles. Achievement was higher in Reading than Mathematics, and higher for non-minority students.

What are the funding patterns in ESAA schools (treatment) and how do they differ from the non-ESAA schools (control)?

Table 1

Per-Pupil Expenditures For Third Year (1975-76)

	Basic Elementary		Basic Secondary		Pilot Elementary	
Funding Source	T	C	T	C	T	C
Regular district funds	$1032	$1040	$1021	$ 922	$ 917	$ 908
ESAA	321	34	91	32	329	168
Non-ESAA supplemental	196	95	3	1	91	130
Total Supplemental	517	129	94	33	419	298
Total (all sources)	1549	1169	1115	1025	1336	1206

Only the Basic Elementary sample showed a significant (treatment-control) difference in total per-pupil funding favoring the ESAA schools.

How are supplemental expenditures allocated within ESAA schools, and how do patterns differ from non-ESAA schools?

- For ESAA schools, approximately 2/3 of the total supplemental funds (ESAA and non-ESAA supplemental) are spent on instruction in basic skills (Reading and Mathematics).

- For each sample, the majority of ESAA funds are targeted on Reading instruction.

- In the Basic Elementary sample (but not in the Basic Secondary or the Pilot Elementary samples), ESAA schools spent significantly more supplemental funds for basic skills instruction than the non-ESAA schools ($398 vs. $240 per pupil).

How successfully are ESAA program resources and services targeted to schools and students with need for those services?

Results from all 3 years of the ESAA evaluation indicate than ESAA funds are being allocated to school districts whose students have acute academic needs. Recipient districts and schools translated their ESAA funds into services appropriate for their students, and focused these services most heavily on students with the greatest academic need.

What was the impact of ESAA participation on student achievement?

- There were no significant differences between the ESAA and non-ESAA students for the first two years of the evaluation, but there is evidence of program impact in Reading and Mathematics in Year Three for the Basic Elementary sample -- although not for the Basic Secondary or Pilot Elementary samples. That is, the Basic Elementary sample (all students tested during the third year) showed statistically significant treatment-control differences, favoring the ESAA-funded schools, in student achievement gains. This finding is consistent with the fact that only in the Basic Elementary sample did ESAA schools have significantly higher total per-pupil expenditure levels than did their paired control schools. In the other two samples, school administrators apparently used other sources of funds to provide supplementary services similar to those of ESAA and this may have obscured effects of the ESAA program.

  The finding of significant Basic Elementary program impact in Year Three, when no such significant impact was evident in Years One and Two, seems to have two explanations. First, there was apparently some increase in the treatment-control funding differential (favoring ESAA schools) between Years Two and Three. Second, the greater evidence of program impact in Year Three may reflect program

maturation effects. That is, by Year Three, the local ESAA projects may have completed most of their start-up activities, such as long-range planning, staff recruitment, and materials development; this may have freed them to concentrate more effort on activities of more immediate and direct benefit to the students, such as actual classroom instruction, and preparation and implementation of daily lesson plans.

- There was no evidence that, nationally, the activities of the Basic and Pilot Project Grants programs have thus far been able to change students' perceptions of the way teachers and principals treat minority-group students, although progress in this area was found in some ESAA schools. It should be noted, however, that the students' perceptions of the treatment of minorities were generally positive in both ESAA and non-ESAA schools.

What kinds of programs were most effective in improving student achievement?

- Larger gains in student achievement were found in schools having higher total per-pupil expenditures -- but no "critical funding mass" was found.

- Organizational Climate. The more successful schools had administrators who (a) felt strongly about instruction and communicated these views to teachers (through regular review and discussions with teachers), (b) assumed greater responsibility for selecting instructional materials and for planning and evaluating school programs, and (c) emphasized academic standards by reviewing teaching performance, by opposing postponement of basic skills instruction, and by requiring low-achieving students to repeat grades.

- Instructional Practices In Reading And Mathematics. Students were significantly more likely to gain in Mathematics when teachers (a) introduced a lesson by placing it in the context of previously-learned material, (b) praised students frequently and favored restricting rewards to desired behaviors, (c) used behavioral objectives and placed importance on setting challenging goals, and (d) emphasized behavioral objectives and individualized instruction. A similar trend was observed for achievement gains in Reading.

- Equality Of Educational Opportunity. In schools placing greater emphasis on equality of educational opportunity, students were significantly more likely to interact without regard to race or ethnicity, minority-group students were significantly more likely to perceive teachers as treating them favorably, and schools that placed greater emphasis on providing equality of educational opportunity were more successful in raising student achievement.

SUMMARY

A three-year evaluation of the ESAA Basic and Pilot Project Grants programs indicates that, by the end of the third year, the program appears to be having some impact on student achievement. This impact was limited to the Basic Elementary sample. Conclusions could not be drawn about ESAA impact in the Basic Secondary and Pilot Elementary samples because similarities in patterns of expenditures between treatment and control schools indicated that for these two samples ESAA and non-ESAA students were receiving the same kind of education. Regarding program attributes most effective, student achievement was higher in those programs where (a) there was strong administrative leadership behind the ESAA program, (b) instructional practices relied heavily on the use of behavioral objectives and individualized instruction, and (c) emphasis was placed on equality of educational opportunity. The program does not yet appear to be having any effect on student perception of school climate.